GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Sweepers, Man Your Brooms

Years ago, in the wild and woolly towns of the west, when spring came and the snow melted it was not uncommon for a number of corpses to appear. They had been tossed into the snow during the winter.

When snow and ice melt off the runways, many missing parts of aircraft and tugs and snow plows and tools are likely to appear. If not removed they may create corpses.

Flight Safety Foundation reports that at a large civilian airport more than a bushel basketful of airplane parts were picked up in a single search. The housecleaning in this instance was prompted by the fact that a monkey wrench had been hurled from wheel to prop and into the cabin of an airplane. Fortunately no one was hurt.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

The Navy has always taken pride in its good housekeeping at sea and ashore, but once in a while there is a slip-up that causes an accident or a near miss.

Not long ago a PB4Y came in for a landing at an airfield in the Pacific and struck a coke bottle left on the runway, causing a severe cut in the starboard tire. The tire went flat in approximately 6 minutes. A serious accident could have happened had the cut been a little deeper.

With jet aircraft operating from more and more fields it is vitally important to keep runways, ramps, and taxiways clear of debris. Engine run up, taxiing behind other planes or in high winds are critical times for sucking in debris.

Keep the runways clean. A rag blown out on the airfield may cause a crash.

Take That—and That.

Some time ago a crew was assigned to ferry a medium bomber south from the States. The entire trip had just been one headache after another for the pilot.

First there were layovers due to engine trouble, then delays due to bad weather. The pilot didn't seem able to make a smooth landing on the entire trip. Finally as they approached an airfield one stop away from the final destination, it happened again. The wheels wouldn't come down.

The pilot flew around and around trying to lower the gear by every known means—but no luck. Finally he gave up and came in for a belly landing. The

bomber slithered along the ground. Then the final straw—the plane caught fire.

Flames and smoke enveloped it. A crash truck streaking to the rescue found the crew members had cleared the ship without injury. They were huddled in a group watching the fire—all except the pilot. He stood apart from the rest, so they tell me, with a vengeful look on his face, and was busy throwing rocks at the burning ship.

Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

At long last I believe that you've been caught with your landing gear down in the wrong place, and at the wrong time. On page 6 of the March issue of N. A. NEWS discussing the ditching of an R5D you state: "Two distinct shocks were felt on impact with the water, a slight shock when the tail wheel first made contact, and then a second more severe shock".

I don't recall ever seeing an R5D with a tail wheel. The ones that I flew were all equipped with highly efficient steerable nose wheels.

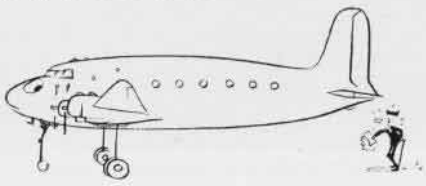
I wonder how many of my ex-squadron mates will get you for this one. I am personally sorry to do this, but I couldn't let it go by.

Yours for safe flying,

Cdr., USN.

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Not only your squadron mates, but everyone from ship's cook to Admiral seems to have caught this boner. In fact a lot of the letters started out, "I've never flown an R5D, but . . .".



I'm still trying to figure out how the word "wheel" worked its way into that sentence.

Right after getting the stories for the March and April issues ready for the printer, I set out on a 10,000-mile aerial hitch-hiking expedition which took me to Newfoundland, the Azores, Africa, Europe, England, Iceland, and home again. I traveled minus beard and cane and under an assumed name, but I certainly was impressed with the efficiency of Navy Air Transport Operations along these routes.

At the very first stop I noticed that the R5D in which I was riding circled outside the landing pattern for a few minutes. The weather was fine and the field in sight. For a moment I thought maybe the pilots were having some mechanical difficulty. Then the flight orderly told me that we were just waiting our turn to make a practice Ground Controlled Approach. This procedure was repeated at every field equipped with GCA facilities, and probably explains why there are so few cancellations of VR flights or stops due to weather. The constant practice keeps pilots and ground crews ready for the real McCoy—when the ceiling is down to 300 or 400 feet.

When I got back to the office, somebody said, "Gee, your Hooper rating is really going up. Look at all the mail that came in while you were gone". I did and came to the conclusion that everybody, everywhere, knows that an R5D doesn't have a tail wheel.

Thanks for the letters, and to VR-1 and VR-24—thanks for the rides.

Dear Grampaw Pettibone:

Please settle something once and for all without any weasel-wording. Can the Commanding Officer of a Naval Air Station prevent a green card pilot of another command from taking off due to the weather conditions?

We all know that the Commanding Officer has the prerogative of closing a field under his command. Also by article 4-304, BUAER Manual, he can ground a transient aircraft which he considers unfit for flight. So don't quote these two regs. I contend that the Commanding Officer has no more authority to prevent a green card pilot from another command from taking off because of weather conditions than the Commanding Officer of a shipyard can prevent a ship from getting under way and proceding to sea.

Of course, he can always throw a

straight jacket around the pilot and say he is crazy to fly in such weather, but that is begging the question.

I have always been proud of my green card, but if the clearance authority that is supposed to go with it doesn't mean anything, the color might as well be changed to ochre.

Yours truly,
Cdr., USN

Grampaw Pettibone Says:

Finding a non-weasel-word answer to this question isn't so easy.

As you know, ACL No. 67-50 sets forth certain qualifications, clearance procedures, and requirements for naval aviators engaging in instrument flights which are subject to Civil Air Regulations. Paragraph 4 of this ACL states that commanding officers of naval air stations and other clearance authorities will be *guided* by the provisions of this letter. One of the provisions of the letter is that there are no weather minimums for green card pilots.

However, nothing in this letter authorizes a green card pilot to sign his own clearance.

Another directive which is still in effect as we go to press (ACL 97-47) states that, "The commanding officer of a naval air station or other shore station or base regularly operating aircraft shall not permit the taking off from the station under his command of naval aircraft when the state of the weather or the condition of the aircraft is such as, in his estimation, to jeopardize the proposed flight . . ."

As a result of these two directives, the following situation may easily arise:

A green card pilot from another command requests a flight clearance at a naval air station on a day when the weather enroute is not just stinko, but definitely unsuitable for the birds. Now Mr. "G" has authority from his own commanding officer to make the flight. He is also considerably braver than the pigeons and seagulls who have all sought shelter under the eaves of the hangar. His only problems are to get someone to sign his clearance, and then to get ATC approval of his flight plan.

The operations duty officer, acting under authority delegated to him by the commanding officer of the station, tells Mr. "G" that the weather is so bad that he won't sign the clearance. Mr. "G" whips out a copy of ACL 67-50 which he has tucked in his pocket for just such an occasion and reads the sentence that says, "No take-off or landing weather minimums apply. Clearance will depend on the judgment of the pilot."

The ODO, ready for any emergency, reaches under the counter and pulls out ACL 97-47. He reads aloud the paragraph quoted above and states that in his opinion the weather will definitely jeopardize the proposed flight.

By this time Mr. "G" is reaching the boiling point. He waves his green card and says, "Yours not to reason why. Look at the date on ACL 67-50, it's a later directive, SIGN MY CLEARANCE!"

By this time, the ODO senses that he is losing ground, so he picks up the phone and asks the skipper of the station for an interpretation of the apparently conflicting directives.

The skipper wants to know what's going on in Pundunk that makes it so important to fly over there in such lousy weather. Mr. "G's" private opinion is that this is none of the skipper's business; besides he doesn't want to tell him that his main reason for flying over there is to line up a date for next Saturday night.

He says, "Captain, I'm scheduled for an instrument training flight. I've got a green card. I know the weather is bad, but how can I get any real practice without flying in bad weather?"

The Captain says, "Why don't you fly down to Pea Ridge instead. You'll be on instruments all the way and get just as much practice, but you won't have to fly at an icing level for so long?"

Well, your guess is as good as anyone else's as to who wins the argument. The outcome will probably depend on the personalities and the signal numbers of the people involved.

However, I have one suggestion to make. In the event that the operations officer or the C.O. elects to sign the clearance under such conditions, I think he should require Mr. "G" to sign a form similar to the one below, and clip this form to the copy of the flight clearance retained at the operations desk:

Date _____
Time _____

From: _____
Name Rank Serial

To: Operations Officer.

_____
Activity

I have been briefed regarding the unfavorable weather conditions prevailing for the flight proposed in the clearance to which this statement is attached. I acknowledge that I have been advised not to undertake the flight at this time. I possess a valid "Special" instrument rating, and believe that I can complete the flight without undue hazard to myself or the aircraft. I therefore intend to disregard the advice referred to above and to proceed with the flight.

_____
Signature

P.S. In case of death or injury notify the following persons and/or activities:

_____
_____
_____

_____
Initials

P.P.S. I have/have/not made out my last will and testament. This document is located at:

_____

_____
Initials

FLASH! LATE NEWS!

Perhaps by the time this is in print directives regarding the clearance of "Green" Card Pilots will have been clarified. The following is quoted from a recent OPNAV letter dated 8 March 1951 on this subject:

"An OPNAV Instruction is under preparation, together with a change to U. S. Navy Regulations, which will clarify this apparent ambiguity. It is the intention of the Chief of Naval Operations that a "Special" designated pilot will be able to clear himself so far as terminal and enroute weather conditions are concerned, subject to his own judgment. Good judgment must include acceptance of GCA minimums, except under unusual circumstances.

"Similarly, availability of high intensity approach and runway lighting for landing under fog conditions is considered elemental without further stipulation. In view of the variable factors of weather and equipment available, both ground and airborne, it is not believed that rigid minimums should be specified.

"Those to whom a green card has been entrusted must be qualified best to judge all the circumstances for a particular flight. The Commanding Officer will retain his authority to clear aircraft for reasons other than weather (i.e. lack of a crash truck, foul runway, malfunctioning AirNavAids, etc.)

"Until such time as the proposed changes are promulgated, currently effective regulations give full authority to the Commanding Officer to establish such minimums as he deems advisable and which must be observed by all, including 'special' designated pilots."

Are You A Scooter Pilot?

Remember the good old days when your folks gave you your first scooter? Even after you got pretty good at handling it, you could always put one foot back on the ground for a push or to regain your balance.

Aircraft Accident Reports indicate that a few Navy pilots have never outgrown the urge to drag one foot. A "Scooter Pilot" flys marginal weather by getting down real close to the ground and dodging the hills right under the overcast. The results are often fatal.

Unless you are qualified to shift to an instrument flight plan and climb up to an altitude that gives you a margin of safety, you'd better do a 180° and wait for better weather.

The one foot on the ground technique that worked so well on your scooter, can get you into a lot of trouble in an airplane.